

Referendum looms for aquatic centre

■ Josh Nyman

Denmark ratepayers may be called on to decide if they want to pay for an aquatic centre costed anywhere between \$4.5 million and \$9.3 million, through a referendum early next year.

At a Denmark Shire Council meeting on Tuesday, councillors debated a report that took seven months to complete, for almost three hours before deciding to sup-

port several of 12 recommendations, including the proposal to hold a referendum by March.

Shire chief executive Dale Stewart has until February 12 to formulate a series of possible referendum questions.

Council will then decide which question to pitch to voters.

The question, along with results of economic and social studies, concept plans and costings, will be put to voters to determine how

large a rate rise they are willing to tolerate to help fund the construction and ongoing running cost of an aquatic centre.

If it goes ahead, it will be the first time Denmark has held a referendum in the Shire's 100-year history as a local government.

The referendum result will be included in applications for up to \$7.6 million in grants from State and Federal authorities, including 50 per cent of the total project cost

from round four of the Regional Development Australia Fund.

Shire president Ross Thornton said the centre would be the "biggest issue" to affect Denmark's rates in history.

"This is a big decision for the rate payers of Denmark, whether they choose to fund the ongoing running of the aquatic centre, and that is probably between \$250,000 and \$450,000 per year," he said.

"We all want the pool, the question is how much we are prepared to pay for it."

Denmark Aquatic Centre Committee vice-president Cyril Edwards said he hoped council would follow a tight timeline to allow the committee to develop its final RDAF grant application.

A Tell us what you think. Email subsdesk@albanyadvertiser.com or send us a letter